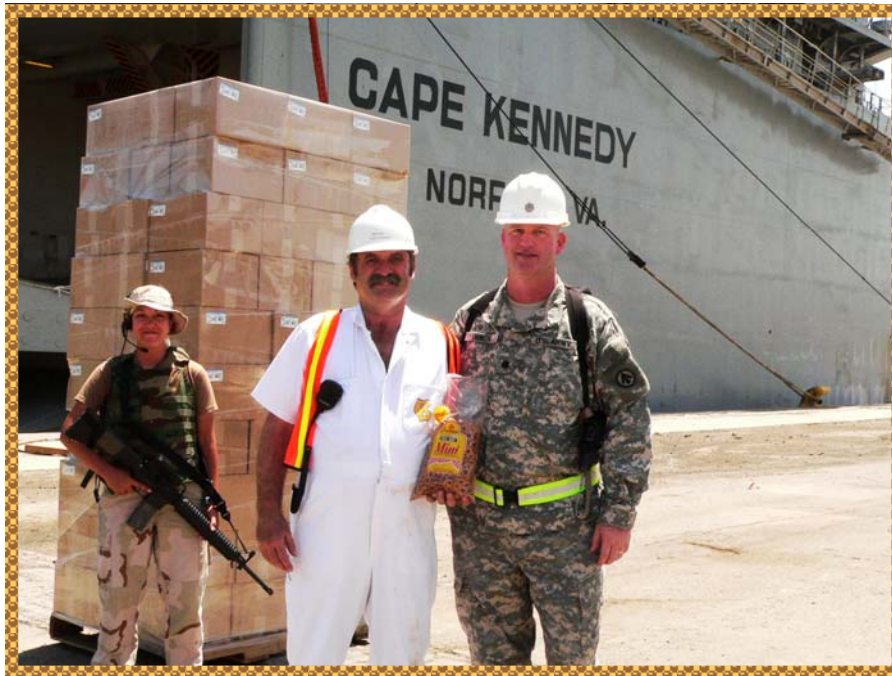


A Twisted Story: Pretzels to the Troops

Operation Support ~ Pretzel began with a simple question and ended with a shipload of pretzels headed for the Middle East on a MARAD ship. “Big John” Ulrich, a Korean War veteran of Berks County, Pa., was talking to a U.S. Army reservist on leave from duty in Iraq. Ulrich asked the reservist what the locals could do to support the troops, and the answer was, “PRETZELS! The locals miss pretzels!”

Ulrich began working to raise funds—and pretzels—from the community, and got the support of schoolchildren, businesses, service groups, churches and The Bachman Company. The company offered to match case for case anything that Ulrich raised in funds in order to purchase pretzels. Finally, they were ready to go with a shipment of more than 72,000 bags of pretzels to go out as a surprise gift for the Morale, Welfare and Recreation program in Iraq.



Captain Hasson of the MV Cape Kennedy and Lt. Col. Bunch of the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command in Kuwait stand in front of 1 of 25 pallets of pretzels that arrived aboard the Cape Kennedy for distribution to the troops in Iraq.

Here's where the MV *Cape Kennedy* entered the picture. The MARAD-owned ship made five previous trips to the Middle East carrying supplies and materiel to support U.S. Armed Forces. It was the *Cape Kennedy*, fresh from supporting hurricane recovery efforts in its home port of New Orleans, that got the assignment to carry the pretzels—along with vehicles, supplies and materiel—to the Middle East. The initial request to ship the pretzels was made by The Bachman Company to MARAD. MARAD through the *Cape Kennedy*'s ship manager, Keystone Shipping, ensured the pretzels were stocked in the ship's stores and delivered from Norfolk, Va., to Kuwait.

The pretzels were unloaded at Ash Shuaybah, Kuwait, and treated like the precious cargo they were. The head of the Army Reserve Center in Reading, PA, told Ulrich he didn't think anything of this magnitude had ever been done as a morale booster for the troops.